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## SIXTY-NINTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS

Above all else it is a display of contemporary portraiture, this sixty-ninth annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which opened to the public January 15th in the Quaker City. That there are canvases galore that do not come under this category goes without saying, but the cream of it all—the paintings one carries away in one's mental vision, not to mention a number one hastens to forget—are portraits. With the exception of Frederick Melville Du Mond's huge "Theater of Nero," a reproduction of which appeared in *BRUSH AND PENCIL* some months ago, the exhibits come within the ordinary easel size. Nor are there any the questionable nature of which will set the town's tattlers' tongues a-wagging; even that old bone of contention, the nude in art, should escape a picking this season, for the nude is very unobtrusive and modest, at least in numbers. As for canvases in the impressionistic style, they are fewer even than last season, and then their number was scant. Evidently the sun of that school of art will soon be set.

As one would expect naturally, the greater majority of the pictures shown are by American artists, but some few canvases by foreign painters, interesting both intrinsically and for purpose of comparison, have been borrowed for exhibition.

Custom has decreed that the middle space on the north wall of the main gallery shall be the place of honor, and here, installed in all its glory, we find Miss Cecelia Beaux's striking portrait of Mrs. Clement A. Griscom and Miss Griscom, the "Mother and Daughter" that won the gold medal and \$1,500 at the Carnegie Institute last fall, and called forth that tremendous encomium from William M. Chase, who, in publicly complimenting the artist, pronounced her "not only the greatest living woman painter, but the greatest woman painter who ever lived." As Miss Sheaffer refers to this prize-winning portrait in her article on the Carnegie Institute exhibition,\* and a reproduction of it appeared at that time in this magazine, I shall not comment upon it further.

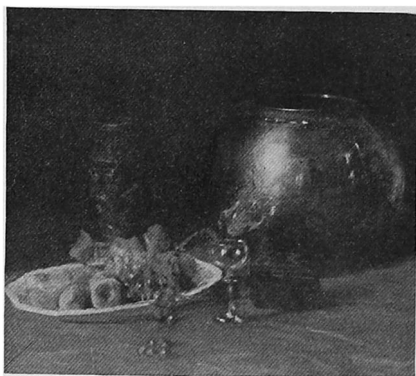
Miss Beaux has two other portraits in the exhibition, one a full-length of a matron in an evening attire of white silk, particularly pleasing in tone. I can't say that I care for the other example, a young lady also in evening dress.

But the portrait that appeals most to me in the entire collection is

\* Published in the December number of *BRUSH AND PENCIL*.

that of Miss Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College, painted by John S. Sargent. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the merits of this work, as evinced by several rather acrimonious comments upon it that have appeared in communications to the local newspapers. One critic pronounces Sargent a greatly overrated painter, whose intelligence is not great enough to depict faithfully the character of so learned a woman as Miss Thomas; then the background of the picture comes in for condemnation. Again, it is said that the lady is made to look too young—a gentle fault, surely!

Now, I have never had the pleasure of meeting Miss Thomas, so that I cannot pass upon the question of the likeness; but I do think that I know a good painting when I see it, and I share the not uncommon



THE BIG BRASS BOWL, BY W. M. CHASE

belief that Sargent knows his business, although willing to admit that he naps at times, as a venerable quotation tells us even Homer was known to do. Certainly, in painting the portrait under discussion, he kept wide awake, and, what is more, wisely restrained himself, as is not his invariable custom. As for the criticism on the lack of intelligence in the face of the portrait (let Mr. Sargent defend the charge against himself, if he hold it worth while), that is a poser for me, to whom it seems extraordinary that any one possessed of reasoning faculties and blessed with half an eye should overlook the mental power depicted in this counterfeit presentation of a brainy woman.

Both Miss Beaux's "Mother and Daughter" and the portrait of Miss Thomas are to be sent to the Paris Exposition.

Across the gallery from the Sargent portrait just described is another by the same artist, that of the late Calvin S. Brice, who stands in characteristic attitude, eyeglasses dangling from fingers, as if addressing a friend. It is a beautiful piece of work.

Mr. William M. Chase has three portraits in the exhibition, but better than them is his still-life entitled "The Big Brass Bowl," a stunning bit of painting, rich in color, and remarkable for the skill with which the reflections in the polished metal have been reproduced on canvas.

Most disappointing is the quartette of portraits by Robert W. Vonnoh, an artist for whose capabilities I have high respect, but

whose art in this instance seems to have been vanquished by commercialism. The least said about this group the better

A novelist could not have conceived a more dramatic situation than that which Winslow Homer has selected for his picture entitled "The Gulf Stream." One looks out upon a waste of bright blue



MASTER GEORGE ELKINS, BY R. W. VONNOH

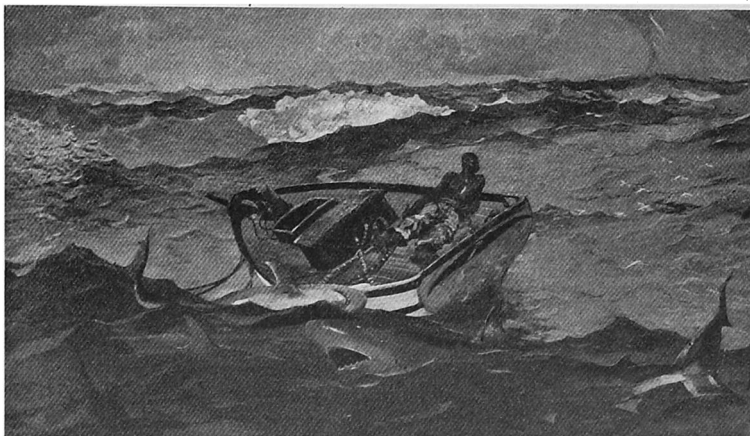
waters—blue as only tropical waters can be—and sees a disabled fishing-smack, drifting rudderless, bowsprit and hatch carried away, on the deck of which reclines a half-nude negro, upon whose face is written the calmness of despair. In the immediate foreground sharks play upon the surface of the deep, and in the distance is a waterspout. And all under the fierce light of a Southern sky. Albeit the painting strikes one as somewhat too hard in outline, one cannot deny its power.

Three pictures contributed by John W. Alexander lack that violence, that eccentricity of pose,

that characterized those sent by him to the exhibitions of last season and the season before that. To my mind this is a great improvement. The decorative quality is still there, and with it a great gain in artistic restraint. Skimming light plays a prominent part in all three of these, and each is the study of a single feminine figure. In one a young girl is shown seated at a café table—the glass is capitally painted; in another she is fixing her tresses before a dressing-table, and in the third the young lady is seated with her back to the light, looking at a rose she holds in her hand. Simple in the extreme, yet very taking, all three of them.

Two portrait studies by John Lavery strike my fancy, and "aristocratic" is the adjective which seems to me suitable to describe their workmanship as well as the women who sat for them. One is the portrait of a Roman lady with reddish tresses, the other a fair Florentine wrapped in a gray opera-cloak trimmed with fur. She of the Titianesque locks wears a flimsy bodice in black, studded with spangles (should I say *passamenterie*?—the fair sex will set me right), that accentuates the beauty of the skin, and is very effective in the painting.

The contrast between a picture of Childe Hassam's painted some



THE GULF STREAM, BY WINSLOW HOMER

years ago and his more recent impressionistic sketches, made under Italian skies—all of which hang near together—is something startling. The first, which won medals at Munich and the World's Fair, Chicago, is a careful rendering of a scene on Fifth Avenue, New York, during a snowstorm; the others are clever little slap-dash sketches, full of sunlight, one of which has an error in drawing which is so glaring that it is ludicrous. The fault in question is found in a little picture called "The Mediterranean," which depicts a clump of trees, a rock, and three young women standing in the shallows of the blue water. Now, one of these damsels, who has an arm uplifted, which hides her neck, seems to be pulling her head out by the roots, rather than fixing her hair, so absurdly far does her face appear above her body.

I found two of the younger artists admiring this picture, who went to some length to explain to me that Childe Hassam had painted the feminine forms just as he had painted the rocks, as adjuncts to the

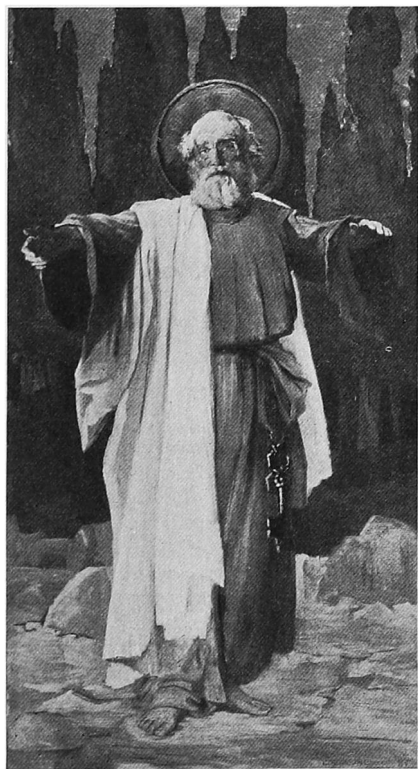
landscape, not as life studies, and that consequently it was of little importance whether they were in drawing or not. My side of the argument was, that although in certain cases laxity in drawing was

admissible, when the error became the most prominent thing in the picture it was an unpardonable fault.

One hardly knows why the canvas by James Wilson Morrice, "La Communiant," was hung in such conspicuous position. This spring scene in the streets of Paris is pleasing in tone, but the drawing is crude throughout, so that the whole looks more like a morning's hasty sketch than a finished picture.

Hung conspicuously upon the line, and deserving careful study, is "A Family Group," by George De Forest Brush, the fourth in the series of which the Boston Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts both possess fine examples. This time Mrs. Brush is shown, with five of the little ones, from the baby in swaddling clothes—actual, not metaphorical, swaddling clothes—to the eldest of the little brood, the boy whose acquaintance we made some years ago.

The coloring is very mel-



ST. PETER. STUDY FOR A MURAL PANEL  
BY GABRIELLE S. CLEMENTS

low, and the composition has all the tenderness of an old Italian master, that elusive quality that one feels deeply and which is yet so hard to describe.

The only nude of any importance is Joseph De Camp's picture entitled "Sleep"; although one is fain to remark that the young lady he has caught napping has taken a most uncomfortable position for slumber. However, Mr. De Camp has given us a rendering of flesh with cool, satisfying shadows, much of an improvement upon some of

his former renderings of similar subjects, although to my eye the thigh of the sleeping girl seems somewhat wooden in contour.

Two views of Dutch life are Gari Melchers' contributions this season. His "Young Mother," which is possessed of considerable decorative quality, will probably please the more. It shows a youthful vrouw, of the peasant type, who sits looking down upon her yellow-haired urchin, who leans upon her knee. A cape of figured dark reddish brown falls in straight lines from her shoulders, from beneath which peep the green cuffs of her gown. A cupboard of reddish wood forms the background, upon which a yellow plate is introduced directly behind the woman's profile, so that it has the effect of a nimbus—a piece of trickery that has little to commend it. In Mr. Melchers' other picture, the "Sailor and His Sweetheart," the adoring expression of the country maiden and the stolid contentment of her phlegmatic lover, capitally rendered, are most amusing.

Would that W. T. Dannat would send us a really important picture! His "Quartette," in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, has been the subject of my admiration for years; but the little canvas he calls "Madeline," which figures in the Academy display, although a clever study of red and black, and well enough in its way, is unsatisfactory to one who knows the artist's capabilities. The "Sacristy in Aragon," by the same painter, has been loaned by the Chicago Art Institute for this exhibition.

Thomas Eakins has gone to the prize-ring in choice of a subject,



MADELINE, BY W. T. DANNAT

and gives us a realistic but somewhat unpleasant view of a boxing match, "Between Rounds," ugly in color, but fine in drawing.

Miss Anna Lea Merritt, who is visiting Philadelphia at the present writing, has contributed a decorative canvas, "The Merry Maids," which was shown at the Royal Academy's last exhibition. It is a pretty composition of a group of girls dancing along the bank of a river. The same artist exhibits a small portrait of J. McLure Hamilton.

There are portraits, too, by Wilton Lockwood, J. Alden Weir, Louis Paul Dessar, Samuel Isham, Edward Simmons, and Louis Loeb.

Among the landscapes is a beautiful moonlight scene of a little village street, by Edward F. Rook; Fritz Thaulow's brilliant picture of an old mill in Norway, with its red bricks thrown into bold relief by the setting of snow and ice-cold mill stream; a fine "Autumn Twilight," by Leonard Ochtman; and a "Winter Morning," by Charles H. Davis. Several of Charles H. Fromuth's familiar groups of fishing-boats are given places on the line.

Water-colors and pastels are quite numerous. Perhaps the most striking picture in this division is "The Prayer," by Jessie Wilcox Smith, a reproduction of which serves as one of the illustrations to this article. Although somewhat hard in outline, it is pleasing in both color and composition.

A group of sketches, made in Egypt and Italy, by Susan H. Bradley, have interest for both traveler and art-lover; and two very fine portrait studies in pastel are contributed by Albert Jean Adolphe.

The pictorial possibilities of Gotham's streets are shown by both Everett Shinn and George Luks, in spirited sketches in colored chalk, crude in drawing, but full of snap and local characteristics. Numerous illustrations, chiefly by local artists, are included in this section.

Of sculpture there is very little, and that little not of much importance. Last season this department was unusually fine, but it must have cost a pretty penny to bring it to the Academy; and this, I suspect, is the reason why this season's examples of plastic art are so few in number.

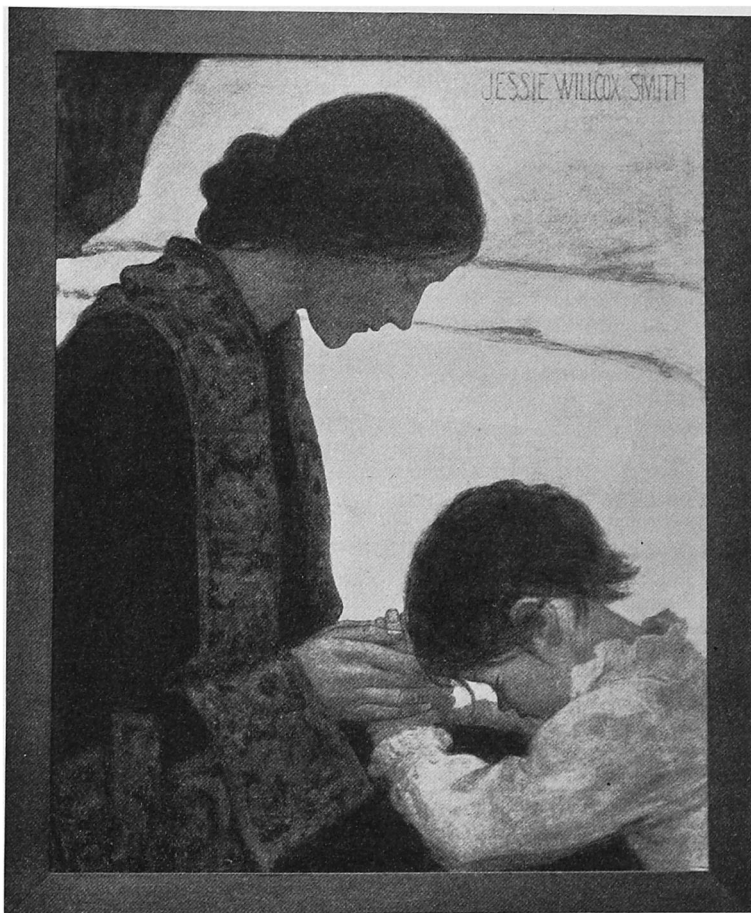
That the importance of the exhibition as a whole is appreciated widely is shown by the number of visitors who are not Philadelphians. This is as it should be, for the collection is fully representative of the best in modern painting.

Since the above was written the following rewards have been bestowed:

The Walter Lippincott prize of \$300 for the best figure painting in the exhibition by an American artist, the same to be available for purchase by Mr. Lippincott, to Henry O. Tanner, for his picture entitled "Nicodemus." This artist is now living in Paris, but began his art studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His "Raising of Lazarus" was bought by the French government for the



Luxembourg. The picture of "Nicodemus" was shown at the Carnegie Institute exhibition before it was seen in Philadelphia.



THE PRAYER, BY JESSIE WILCOX SMITH

The Temple gold medal for the best painting in oil by an American artist, to Miss Cecilia Beaux, for her portrait group, "Mother and Daughter," the same which gained her the medal and \$1,500 at the Carnegie Exhibition in Pittsburg.

FRANCIS J. ZIEGLER.